

UK Government Minister for Scotland visits Iceland to build trade links and discuss climate change goals

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord arrives in Iceland today [Wednesday 12 October] on a two-day visit to speak at the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik, discuss common climate change goals and build trade links.

Representing the UK as one of more than 60 countries participating in the largest annual Arctic gathering, Minister Offord will give the UK address at the Assembly.

He'll discuss the UK Government's post-Brexit renewed Arctic Policy Framework, which is due to be published later this year, setting out the UK's commitment to shared interests in science, environment, climate change and commerce.

Ahead of his visit, Minister Offord said:

The Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet and this has profound implications for the UK, in terms of our weather, our environment and our security. We must therefore take action domestically. By reducing our own emissions and showing global leadership, we can encourage others around the world to join the effort.

Scotland and Iceland have strong economic, academic and cultural links, and we greatly value these important ties. In particular, I'm keen to promote Scotland's vital role within the United Kingdom and globally in terms of trade, energy and innovation.

Building our relationship with the Nordic countries – including Iceland – will bring direct benefit to Scottish business and to communities right across the UK.

Minister Offord will meet with other UK delegates from Orkney Islands Council as well as with counterparts from Iceland, Canada, the Faroe Islands, Norway and India, and hold discussions with Icelandic parliamentarians around Scotland's offshore wind sector and the huge part it plays in the UK Government's bold 2050 Net Zero targets

As well as having shared environmental goals, the UK and Iceland are significant commerce partners, with trade between the two countries worth around £1.1 billion in the year to March 2022. Scotland exported goods worth £31m to Iceland in 2021.

Icelandic companies have a number of high-tech and asset investments in the UK, and the University of Edinburgh offers a popular foundation course in Icelandic. In addition, both Scotland and Iceland have strong fishing and fish processing industries and tourism between the two countries is bolstered by direct Reykjavik-Glasgow flights.

As well as attending the Assembly, Minister Offord will visit a number of Icelandic businesses to strengthen links in sectors where the UK Government is investing at home, with the focus on growth in Scotland.

He'll tour biotech company Orf Genetics and associated plant-based skincare firm BioEffect. There are parallels between Orf's work in producing barley-based proteins and the research to be undertaken at the International Barley Hub at Dundee's James Hutton Institute, funded by £20m in UK Government investment and £15m from the Scottish Government through the Tay Cities Deal.

The minister will also visit Iceland's biggest gaming company, CCP Games in Reykjavik, who are keen to establish relationships with industry partners in the UK. He'll discuss potential links in Dundee, regarded as a centre of gaming excellence in Europe due to Abertay University's renowned game design degree and the 4000-seater Esports area due for completion in 2024/25. The UK Government announced £8million of funding in February this year for the Dundee-based UK Games Fund that will encourage skills in the sector, nurture talent and give increased support to entrepreneurial young developers.